

Section 6
CORONER/MEDICAL EXAMINER
MAIN ELEMENTS

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Person attempted suicide after incident: Suic

Name	Definition
Suic	Suspect attempted (or completed) suicide during the incident

Uses

Although the incident-based nature of NVDRS enables researchers to identify cases involving murder/suicide, there may be a scenario when a suspect injures himself but survives. This data element, therefore enables researchers to capture the range of murder/suicide and murder/attempted suicide incidents. Murder/suicides are a violence subtype prominent in cases of intimate partner violence and mass public shootings.

Discussion

This variable is suspect specific. Code as “Yes” if a suspect attempted (or completed) suicide during the incident.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
Suic	Person attempted suicide after incident:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR

Response Options:

Suic	0	No, Not Collected, Not Available, Unknown
	1	Yes

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

Date of death:	DthDt
Manner of death:	Manner
Place of death:	Dthplace
Place of death if other:	PDthTx
State of death:	DthState
State of injury FIPS code:	InjState
County of Injury:	County
City of injury FIPS code:	InjPlace
Street and number of injury site:	InjAddress
Injured at work:	AtWork
Type of location where injured:	LocTyp
Time of injury:	ITime
Date of injury:	Date
Survival time no. of units:	Surviv
Unit of time used in survival time:	SUnit
Birth place:	BthPlc
Country of birth if not listed:	BthTxt
Marital status:	MarStat
Person was pregnant:	Preg
Education:	Educ
Autopsy performed:	Autpsy

See Person/DC/Main Elements section for information regarding variables appearing above.

ZIP code of injury: Zip

Name	Definition
Zip	Zip code in which injury occurred

Uses

The address of the incident is used to determine the agency responsible for potential public health interventions; to gain information about the socioeconomic status (SES) of the neighborhoods in which injuries occur (via U.S. Census data); to map incidents; and to conduct analyses of the case distribution by SES and geographic area. See the Introduction section of this manual for a discussion about handling variables that can identify individual persons or agencies. It is okay to look up the zip code in a directory if it is not provided.

Discussion

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
Zip	ZIP code of injury:	Person	Number	5	O/O	CME/PR

Response Options:

Zip
 99999 Unknown

Data Standards or Guidelines

Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS); National Institute of Standards and Technologies; U.S. Postal Service

At person’s home: Reside

Name	Definition
Reside	Incident occurred at the person’s residence

Uses

Data about whether the incident occurred in the person’s residence can be used to further characterize the injury incident, and may be valuable for planning and evaluating injury prevention programs. It can be used, for example, to evaluate the impact of laws or policies regulating the use of firearms in public versus private locations, or to inform domestic violence interventions.

Discussion

This variable is completed for each victim in an incident and is person-specific. For example, if a man shot his wife and his wife’s sister at the sister’s house, Reside is “No” for the wife, but “Yes” for the sister.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
Reside	At person’s home:	Person	Number	1	LR/LR	CME/PR

Response Options:

Reside	
0	No
1	Yes
9	Unknown

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

EMS at scene: EMS

Name Definition

EMS Were emergency medical services present at the scene of the injury incident?

Uses

EMS status can be used to describe the involvement of emergency medical services in violent injury cases. This may assist in planning and evaluating EMS services and in capturing costs associated with violence.

Discussion

Code only to indicate the presence of EMS at the scene, not to indicate whether any medical services were delivered.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
EMS	EMS at scene:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR

Response Options:

EMS

- 0 No, EMS not at scene
- 1 Yes, EMS at scene
- 9 Unknown

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

Homeless status: Homles

Name Definition

Homles	Was person homeless at the time of the incident?
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Uses

This variable helps to describe how frequently the homeless are victims of violence.

Discussion

Homeless is defined here as having no fixed address and living in a shelter, on the street, in a car, or in makeshift quarters in an outdoor setting. A person who has no home of their own, but is staying indefinitely with friends or family is not considered homeless here. Marking this variable “Yes” means that there was some positive statement about being homeless such as living in a car. Use the “Unknown” option when the residential address is stated as unknown. Otherwise, mark this variable “No”.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
Homles	Homeless status:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR

Response Options:

Homles

0	No
1	Yes
9	Unknown

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

Current occupation: Occup

Name	Definition
Occup	Victim’s employment status, and, if employed, current occupation

Uses

Employment status and occupation are indicators of socioeconomic status. Certain occupations may also be associated with an increased risk of suicide or homicide.

Discussion

Report the occupation in a text field exactly as it appears on the CME report or other report. The information can later be coded at the national level using Standard Occupational Classifications. Note that “current occupation” is different from “usual occupation”, which is recorded on the death certificate. If the person is not employed, enter one of the standard text options listed below. These are not currently available on a drop-down menu, so please be careful to enter them exactly as they appear below and not in an abbreviated version. People who work 17.5 hours or more per week are considered employed; people who work less than that are not.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field length	Priority	Primacy
Occup	Current occupation:	Person	Text	50	O/O	CME/PR

Response Options:

Occup

Enter person’s current occupation in free text, or enter:

- Unemployed
- Homemaker
- Retired
- Student
- Disabled
- NA (under age 14)
- Unknown

Victim in custody when injured: Custody

Name	Definition
Custody	Person was in public custody when injury occurred

Uses

Violent injuries that occur while a victim is in public custody are an issue of public concern and a potential indicator of systemic problems that require change.

Discussion

A person is in public custody if they are under arrest, in foster care, or remanded by law to an institution, such as a jail, prison, detention center, psychiatric ward, psychiatric hospital, or other institution. Custody is coded on the basis of when the injury was inflicted or when the death occurred. If the injury was inflicted while the person was not in custody, but they died in custody, code Custody as “Yes”. An example of such a scenario is a robber who is shot by a storeowner, arrested, and dies two days later from the shooting. The code “Committed to mental hospital or ward” covers involuntary commitments and involuntary observations at psychiatric wards within standard hospitals or at psychiatric institutions. People who voluntarily commit themselves should not be coded as in custody. The code “In jail or prison” also covers incarcerations in juvenile detention facilities and other detention facilities.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
Custody	Victim in custody when injured:	Person	Number	1	O/O	PR/CME

Response Options:

Custody

- 0 Not in custody
- 1 In jail or prison
- 2 Under arrest but not in jail
- 3 Committed to mental hospital or ward
- 4 Resident of other state institution
- 5 In foster care
- 6 Injured prior to arrest
- 9 Unknown

Alcohol use suspected: Intox

Name	Definition
Intox	Victim's suspected alcohol use in the hours preceding the incident

Uses

This variable can be used to explore the role of alcohol use among victims of violent death. The other alcohol variables (AlchRs and BAC) summarize results from toxicology tests conducted as part of the death investigation. This variable uses a broader definition of suspected alcohol use to capture information. It should be noted, however, that because circumstantial evidence is considered sufficient for coding "suspected alcohol use," there will be some false positives.

Discussion

"Alcohol use" can be coded as "Yes" based on witness or investigator reports (e.g., police note that the victim "had been drinking heavily"), or circumstantial evidence (e.g., empty six pack scattered around suicide victim). This variable refers only to alcohol use and not drug use. Therefore, if a person was said to have been smoking crack on the day of the incident, but they tested negative for alcohol and there is no evidence that they were drinking, "Intox" should be coded as "No". The phrase "in the hours preceding the incident" can be interpreted relatively broadly. For example, if friends report that a suicide victim was drinking heavily at a party and returned home that evening and killed himself sometime later that night, "Intox" should be coded as "Yes". If there is no evidence of intoxication, code this variable as "No". Use the "Unknown" option only if the source does not have a narrative that could provide the evidence of intoxication.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
Intox	Alcohol use suspected:	Person	Number	1	LR/LR	CME/PR

Response Options:

Intox

0	No
1	Yes
8	Not Applicable
9	Unknown

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

Date specimens were collected: SpcDt
Time specimens were collected: SpcTme

Name	Definition
SpcDt	Date on which body specimens were collected for toxicologic screen
SpcTme	Time at which body specimens were collected for toxicologic screen

Uses

Date and time of collection of body specimens, in conjunction with date and time of death and injury, can be used to assess the validity of alcohol and drug testing results and the possible contribution of drugs or alcohol to the injury. For example, blood specimens drawn long after death will not accurately reflect intoxication level at the time of death.

Discussion

Time is in the military time format HHMM. For example, if blood was drawn at 10:30 p.m., code as 2230; code midnight as 0000. See the Introduction section of this manual for a discussion about handling variables that can identify individual persons or agencies. The date of the postmortem exam can be used as the date specimens were collected in the absence of other information.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
SpcDt	Date specimens were collected:	Person	Text	10	LR	CME
SpcTme	Time specimens were collected:	Person	Text	4	LR	CME

Response Options:

SpcDt	MM/DD/YYYY	Date specimens were collected
	88/88/8888	Not applicable (no specimens collected)
	99/99/9999	Unknown
SpcTme	0000...2359	Military time
	7777	Not collected by reporting site
	8888	Not applicable
	9999	Unknown

Testing for alcohol: AlchTs
Alcohol test results: AlchRs

Name	Definition
AlchTs	Victim’s blood was tested for presence of alcohol
AlchRs	Results of blood alcohol test

Uses

Alcohol intoxication is a risk factor in many types of injury deaths. Identifying victims for whom objective evidence of alcohol ingestion exists will be useful to those researchers exploring the role of alcohol in violent injury.

Discussion

Coding should be based on toxicologic screening of blood samples conducted as part of the CME’s investigation. Breathalyzer or hospital-based test results should not be reflected in this variable, nor should results based on urine specimens. This information will be most useful in jurisdictions that routinely analyze blood alcohol levels in victims of homicide and/or suicide, as opposed to those that only sporadically do so.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
AlchTs	Testing for alcohol:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
AlchRs	Alcohol test results:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME

Response Options:

AlchTs

- 1 Tested
- 2 Not tested
- 9 Unknown

AlchRs

- 1 Present
- 2 Not present
- 8 Not applicable
- 9 Unknown

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

Blood alcohol concentration results: BAC

Name Definition

BAC	Blood alcohol level
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Uses

This variable enables researchers to categorize victims by blood alcohol level. These data will assist in exploring the relationship between alcohol intoxication and violent death when interpreted in conjunction with data on time of injury, time of death, and time at which body specimens were drawn.

Discussion

Blood alcohol levels are coded in terms of percent by volume (serum %). Percent by volume equals the milligrams of alcohol found per deciliter of blood (mg/dl) divided by 1000. For example, a level of 30 mg/dl would be 0.03% alcohol. How labs report blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) varies. Many use the format used here (serum %), while others report BAC as milligrams of alcohol per deciliter of blood (mg/dl) — as in 30 mg/dl. To convert mg/dl results to serum % results, divide by 1,000. Only BAC levels should be entered here; levels based on other body fluids such as vitreous fluid should not. Use caution when interpreting BAC levels because variation in the time elapsed between ingestion of substances, time of death, and time of drawing body specimens for toxicological analysis will affect the outcome. BACs reported as “<0.01%” are below the detection limit of 0.01%. This should be reported as 0.00% and interpreted as “Not present” in the alcohol test results field. Alcohol that appears in the blood as a result of decomposition rather than ingestion does not generally measure more than 0.04%. BAC results reported as “Trace” should be recorded as 0.01%. BACs reported as <0.01% or “Nondetectable” should be reported as 0.00%, and Alcohol Test Results should be reported as “Not Present”.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
BAC	Blood alcohol concentration results:	Person	Number	3	LR	CME

Response Options:

BAC
 0.88 Not applicable, no testing
 0.99 Unknown
 Format: 0.##

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

TOXICOLOGY TESTING

Testing for amphetamines: AmphTs
Testing for antidepressants: AntiTs
Testing for cocaine: CokeTs
Testing for marijuana: MarjTs
Testing for opiate(s): OpiaTs
Testing for other substances: OtDrTs

Name	Definition
AmphTs	Toxicologic screening for amphetamines conducted
AntiTs	Toxicologic screening for antidepressants conducted
CokeTs	Toxicologic screening for cocaine conducted
MarjTs	Toxicologic screening for marijuana conducted
OpiaTs	Toxicologic screening for opiate(s) conducted
OtDrTs	Toxicologic screening for other substances conducted

Uses

This set of variables identifies victims whose bodily fluids were tested during the death investigation for drugs.

Discussion

These variables indicate whether the victim's blood, urine, vitreous humor (ocular fluid), bile, or other tissues were tested for a variety of drugs or their metabolites by any standard toxicologic screening method.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
AmphTs	Testing for amphetamines:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
AntiTs	Testing for antidepressants:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
CokeTs	Testing for cocaine:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
MarjTs	Testing for marijuana:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
OpiaTs	Testing for opiate(s):	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
OtDrTs	Testing for other substances:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME

Person/CME/Main Elements

Response Options:

AmphTs

thru

OtDrTs

1 Tested

2 Not tested

9 Unknown

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

TOXICOLOGY RESULTS

Amphetamine test results:	AmphRs
Antidepressant test results:	AntiRs
Cocaine test results:	CokeRs
Marijuana test results:	MarjRs
Opiate test results:	OpiaRs
Other drug/substance test results:	OtDrRs
Type of other substance:	OthDrg

Name	Definition
AmphRs	Amphetamines test results
AntiRs	Antidepressants test results
CokeRs	Cocaine test results
MarjRs	Marijuana test results
OpiaRs	Opiate test results
OtDrRs	Other drug/substance test results
OthDrg	Type of other substance for which person tested positive

Uses

This set of variables identifies whether the tests for various drugs or their metabolites were positive or negative. Findings can assist in exploring the relationship between recreational drug use and violent death. The variables can also be used to document the presence of certain psychiatric medications among suicide victims in jurisdictions that test for these substances. The drug variables will be most useful in jurisdictions that routinely run toxicology tests on victims, as opposed to those that only sporadically do so.

Discussion

Drug/substance test results can be coded based on results from any body fluid; it is not restricted to blood only, as is the case for reporting blood alcohol levels. Many labs report test results by reporting both the specific substance that a person tested positive for and the class that the substance falls under. Some, however, report only the substance. In those cases, use the drug/substance list provided in the training manual to identify which broad categories the substance falls under. The drug/substance test result variables can be coded as “Yes” if the lab report or CME summary notes the substance as “positive,” “presumptive presence,” or having a numeric level greater than 0. If there is testing for a drug/substance that does not fall into any of these categories, code “Other” and record the name of the drug/substance in “Type of other substance”. Enter the names of all other

drugs/substances that tested positive. Do not enter the names of other drugs/substances that tested negative. The presence of a metabolite for a drug/substance being tested can be considered sufficient evidence that the drug/substance itself was present. Questions about whether a chemical is a metabolite can be referred to CDC. If whether testing was done is “Unknown”, code the results fields as “Not applicable” rather than “Unknown”.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
AmphRs	Amphetamine test results:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
AntiRs	Antidepressant test results:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
CokeRs	Cocaine test results:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
MarjRs	Marijuana test results:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
OpiaRs	Opiate test results:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
OtDrRs	Other drug/substance test results:	Person	Number	1	LR	CME
OthDrg	Type of other substance:	Person	Text	200	LR	CME

Response Options:

AmphRs
 thru
 OtDrRs
 1 Present
 2 Not present
 8 Not applicable
 9 Unknown
 OthDrg

Data Standards or Guidelines

NVISS

WOUND LOCATION

Number of wounds:	NumWou
Number of bullets that hit victim:	NumBul
Wound to the head:	Head
Wound to the face:	Face
Wound to the neck:	Neck
Wound to the upper extremity:	UpExt
Wound to the spine:	Spine
Wound to the thorax:	Thorax
Wound to the abdomen:	Abdomn
Wound to the lower extremity:	LowExt

Name	Definition
NumWou	Number of wounds to the victim
NumBul	Number of bullets that hit the victim
Head	Presence of wound to the head
Face	Presence of wound to the face (e.g., mouth, nose, eyes, ears)
Neck	Presence of wound to the neck
UpExt	Presence of wound in the upper extremities (shoulders, arms, hands)
Spine	Presence of wound to the spine
Thorax	Presence of wound to the thorax, chest, or upper back
Abdomn	Presence of wound to the abdomen, pelvic contents (including genital area), or lower back
LowExt	Presence of wound to the lower extremities (feet, hips, legs)

Uses

These codes help describe the relationship between incident circumstance and wound location.

Discussion

These data elements apply to firearm injuries and sharp instrument wounds only. For “NumWou,” code the total number of penetrating wounds on the victim. For “NumBul” (for gunshot wound victims only), code the total number of bullets that hit the victim. (See figure on next page for body regions.) For example, if one bullet entered the cheek and exited the back of the head, code “NumWou” as 2, “NumBul” as 1, “Head” as

Person/CME/Main Elements

“Present” and “Face” as “Present”. Code the wound locations of penetrating wounds only; do not code the locations of superficial grazing wounds or blunt trauma wounds. Code only the location of the external entrance or exit wound. When determining the number of wounds and bullets for shotgun injuries, treat each shotgun blast as one injury and each shotgun shell as one bullet. For victims injured by both a gun and a knife, count all wounds from both weapon types and code all wound locations. If the record refers only to a “wound” in the singular, the number of wounds is 1. If it refers only to “wounds,” the number of wounds is “Multiple, unspecified”.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field Length	Priority	Primacy
NumWou	Number of wounds:	Person	Number	2	O/O	CME/PR
NumBul	Number of bullets that hit victim:	Person	Number	2	O/O	CME/PR
Head	Wound to the head:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR
Face	Wound to the face:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR
Neck	Wound to the neck:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR
UpExt	Wound to the upper extremity:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR
Spine	Wound to the spine:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR
Thorax	Wound to the thorax:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR
Abdomn	Wound to the abdomen:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR
LowExt	Wound to the lower extremity:	Person	Number	1	O/O	CME/PR

Response Options:

NumWou and NumBul

- 75 75 or more
- 76 Multiple, unspecified
- 88 Not applicable
- 99 Unknown

Head
thru
LowExt

- 0 Absent (not wounded)
- 1 Present (wounded)
- 8 Not applicable
- 9 Unknown

Data Standards and Guidelines

NVISS